

Illinois assembly votes to relieve taxing problem

By Roger Boye

Many Chicago-area coin dealers may enjoy a boost in business soon, courtesy of the Illinois General Assembly.

Legislation was passed in December that eliminates the sales tax on rare coins and almost all "bullion items" sold in Illinois. Dealers had long complained that many Illinois investors bought coin rarities from mail-order merchants in other states simply to avoid paying the Illinois tax.

"Already we're seeing some [buyers] coming back," said Walter Perschke, president of Numisco Rare Coins Ltd. and one of several dealers who advocated passage of the new law. The Numisco staff lobbied state legislators and a company executive testified twice in Springfield.

Of course, no one knows for sure the precise amount of investment money lost over the years to rare-coin companies in other states, although the figure may be as high as \$200 million. The only coin-related items still subject to sales tax in Illinois are South African Krugerrands and silver bars with less than 98 percent silver.

Some Chicago dealers say they will need several weeks or more to evaluate the law's effect on their businesses. Almost all of them predict, however, that sales should go up, perhaps significantly.

● The U.S. government plans to mail order forms for 1985 proof sets this week, launching the hobby's most popular annual sale.

This year's sets cost \$11 each, the same price charged since 1981. The 1985 version will include five coins [cent through half dollar] housed in a hard-plastic case that will be enclosed in a purple cardboard holder.

All five coins will bear the familiar "S" mint mark. Government workers make proof coins in San Francisco using specially prepared slugs and dies to create mirrorlike finishes free of blemishes.

Most likely, the mint will accept orders until year's end, perhaps even beyond. Hobby pros say there is little chance the number of orders will surpass the mint's four-million set production capacity [collectors bought 3.2 million 1983 sets and, as of Dec. 31, nearly 2.7 million 1984 sets].

By mid-February, the mint staff should complete the mailing of order forms, according to a government spokesman. Collectors who don't receive a form but want to buy sets should send a check or money order to Bureau of the Mint, P.O. Box 7662, San Francisco, Calif. 94120-7662.